
Ecologically Conscious Non-Consumption in Times of Crises: A Social Portrait of Non-purchasers due to Environmental Concerns in Russia

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Abstract

The focus of this study is ecologically conscious (non-)consumption, which reflects a complex of values, attitudes, and practices of the careful and responsible treatment of the environment. We start from the fact that even in times of crisis, which are characterized by social upheaval, decreasing personal income, and growing uncertainty, there are people who demonstrate responsibility towards the environment in their everyday consumer behavior. Using data from a representative survey of the Russian population conducted by HSE University as part of the 'Household Economic Behavior Monitoring' project in 2023, a logistic regression was employed to identify the social portrait of an ecologically conscious consumer during crisis periods, focusing on the refusal to buy goods and services due to environmental concerns in Russia. The regression analysis revealed that ecologically conscious non-consumption is more prevalent among women; young and middle-aged individuals; those who rate their subjective level of well-being as low; individuals who do not own their own home; those not residing in Moscow or St. Petersburg; and consumers of news about the environment and climate change. The study suggests that a crisis might be seen as an opportunity for the transition to ecologically conscious non-consumption as it encourages individuals to seek new ways of satisfying their needs. The results might be academically and practically useful for defining the social potential of ecologically responsible consumer choice, conceptually and empirically distinguishing

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it from other forms of ethical (non-)consumption—such as social responsibility—and to promote caring for the environment among the population in times of crisis.

Keywords: *consumption, non-consumption, ecologically conscious consumption, sustainable consumption, refusal to purchase, boycotts, consumption in crisis, crisis as opportunity, ecological culture, environmental sociology, youth*

Introduction

With the growing awareness of the negative consequences of human activities on the biosphere, the environmental component has become an integral part of economic activity at the international level [IPCC 2022]. Although the roots of environmental problems lie in the sphere of production [Cohen 2007; Lawrence, Mekoth 2023], it is becoming increasingly evident that responsibility for sustainable development is socially distributed: all actors, not just producers, contribute to environmental conservation [Maniates 2001]. Over the past few decades, there has been discussion about sustainable consumption as a set of alternative consumption patterns which are less destructive to the environment, more energy and resource-efficient, and minimize waste [OECD 2023].

Considerable attention has been given to individual predictors of sustainable consumption [Koos 2009; Prothero et al. 2011; Brochado et al. 2017; Elhoushy, Jang 2023]. However, these studies typically confine themselves to examining sustainable consumption through the lens of the free consumer market. In most cases, the emphasis is placed on analyzing the choice of goods and services in favor of environmentally safer and more sustainable options, overlooking the socio-economic context of sustainable consumption.

However, the practical manifestation of individual environmental attitudes through consumption strategies directly depends on a whole spectrum of external conditions [Moisander 2007]. Economic crises lead to income reductions among the population and high levels of social inequality, which can significantly shift consumer priorities and their ability to engage in environmentally conscious behavior. In times of economic crises, consumption strategies often undergo changes influenced by several key factors [Mohseni-Cheraghloou 2016; Koos et al. 2017]. Firstly, the reduction in disposable income among the population decreases the affordability of goods and services, prompting individuals to allocate their financial resources more carefully. Secondly, increased uncertainty and a reduced planning horizon lead to caution and a preference for more conservative consumption strategies. This may result in increased savings and a reluctance to engage in discretionary spending. Thirdly, in times of economic crisis, markets change, leading to the disappearance of certain products and brands, which can influence consumer choices. Considering the price of goods and services in the context of consumer choice is also critically important for understanding the role of environmental factors in consumption decision-making.

The context of a country's economic development is also crucial for understanding consumer practices and the implementation of individual environmental attitudes

[Inglehart 1995]. In emerging economies, conceptual models for developed countries may not be fully applicable due to the peculiarities of social structures and institutions. Consumers' environmentally conscious attitudes may manifest differently depending on the context [Shove 2010]. Therefore, it is necessary to adjust research methods and tools to the context for an adequate analysis of these practices.

Post-Soviet Russia, in this regard, represents a unique case for examining how, and under what conditions, sustainable consumption is possible in unstable times. Criticism of Russian environmental policy points to the specifics of the socio-political structure that hinder the effective implementation of pro-environmental institutions and practices [Newell, Henry 2017; Tulaeva, Snarski 2023]. Russia has been experiencing a state of permanent economic crisis since the 1990s [Kotelnikova, Radaev 2017; Radaev 2023], and special attention should be paid to the influence of crises times on consumer practices and strategies. The economic crises, income reductions, and high levels of social inequality are structural features of contemporary Russia [Kotelnikova, Radaev 2017; Radaev 2023]. An intensification occurred in 2022 due to the mass exodus of foreign companies, a decline in income among the population, and a huge increase in uncertainty. This represents a significant opportunity to measure environmental consumption in such conditions.

There is the evidence that about 33% of Russians have considered, alongside the price and quality of goods, whether manufacturers were environmentally friendly or had abstained from animal testing for cosmetics and/or were known for strict adherence to labor rights [Shabanova 2023]. In this regard, the question arises: who are involved in ecologically conscious (non-)consumption despite unfavorable social and economic circumstances, uncertainty, and decreasing living standards? What is their socio-demographic portrait, what information do they consume, how does this affect their purchasing decisions?

Therefore, this research identifies the social portrait of an ecologically conscious Russian consumer during crisis periods, using the example of refusing to buy due to environmental concerns. This study can help to define the social potential of ecologically responsible consumer choice, conceptually and empirically distinguishing it from other forms of ethical consumption, such as social responsibility [Shabanova 2023]. It can benefit the promotion of caring for the environment among the population in times of crisis.

The conceptualization of ecologically conscious consumption

Socio-cultural norms play a significant role in the formation and functioning of markets [Beckert 2009]. Markets shape the value orientations of individuals and are a space for expressing values that are already shared. The strengthening of the consumer's position in capitalism, the recognition of consumers as a significant force in the economy, and the crystallization of the 'citizen-consumer' have led to the increased significance of the moral aspect of consumption [Shaw 2007; Micheletti 2003].

Sustainable consumption is a broad concept covering a spectrum of consumer patterns, from individual choices to corporate strategies and international policies that

encourage conscientiousness towards society, vulnerable social groups, the environment, and all species, that ensure equal opportunities for human rights and overcoming inequality [Spaargaren 2003; Elhoushy, Jang 2023]. Its main goal is the optimal use of goods and services to satisfy basic human needs and maintain a good quality of life in ways that minimize harmful ethical, social, and environmental consequences in the present.

One aspect of sustainable consumption is ecological, which reflects a complex of consumer choices by which individuals aim to reduce negative environmental impacts, including air, water, soil, ecosystems, and living beings [Muldoon 2006; Moisander 2007; Brochado et al. 2017]. Identified by the criteria of minimizing environmental harm in the subjective intentions of individuals [Moisander 2007], ecologically conscious consumption includes a plethora of practices such as reducing packaging, purchasing second-hand items, engaging in the sharing economy, and a refusal to consume non-essential products that have a negative impact on the environment. In a broad sense, we can conceptually divide ecologically conscious consumption into two types: (1) green purchases – buying goods and services produced in accordance with the principle of responsible attitude to the environment; and (2) boycotts – the refusal to purchase goods and services that do not comply with this principle or due to a general decrease in consumption [Sahakian, Wilhite 2014; Shabanova 2017]. We focus on boycotts in this study. Notably, we understand consumption as the purchase of goods and services (or the refusal to do so) without taking into account the use of the goods and services after the purchase [Warde 2015].

Ecologically conscious (non-)consumption: literature review and hypothesis development

Empirical studies on the factors influencing individual engagement in sustainable consumption, including ecologically conscious consumption, focus on both social and individual determinants. At the macro level, it is necessary to consider the national context such as the characteristics of the economic and political system, infrastructural and informational support for environmental engagement, globalization, and the availability of ethical products in the market [Shabanova 2017; Koos 2009].

Next, we examine the individual predictors of ecologically conscious consumption that are most commonly identified.

Gender. Numerous studies indicate that gender influences participation in ecological consumption. Women are more inclined towards ethical consumption as they tend to have stronger pro-environmental values and concerns [D'Souza, Taghian 2017; Elhoushy, Jang 2023] and are more likely to demonstrate conscientiousness in household activities [Berdysheva, Romanova 2017; D'Souza, Taghian 2017].

Socio-economic status (SES) and its components—income, education, and employment [ESOMAR 1997]—also exert a significant influence on ecological consumption. The level of education, and the type and sphere of employment enhances cultural capital and the ability and willingness to consider information on the sustainable aspects of a product [D'Souza, Taghian 2017; Elhoushy, Jang 2023]. Income level

also affects engagement in ecological consumption; however, its impact is ambiguous. There is a positive association between ecologically conscious consumption and higher income, since the latter is positively correlated with education, access to information on ethical practices, community participation, and an increase in the actual availability of sustainable goods and services, which are often more expensive [Abeliotis *et al.* 2010; Elhoushy, Jang 2023; Shabanova 2023]. Expense is not as relevant for this study since, unlike much research, we measure ecological consumption not through willingness to pay extra for ecological products but through the refusal to make certain purchases, thus reducing the barrier to entry into pro-environmental consumption. We note that in Russia, there is a negative correlation between material well-being and ecological responsibility [Kurbanov, Prokhoda 2019], which the authors associate with the demonstrative reluctance of those of higher SES to engage in ecological practices.

Age. Younger people are more inclined towards reflexive and novel forms of behavior, while middle-aged individuals possess sufficient resources for such choices [Koo 2009; Abeliotis *et al.* 2010; Elhoushy, Jang 2023].

Place of residence. Living in urban areas increases the likelihood of ecological consumption due to the greater development of new markets compared to suburban and rural areas, especially in Russia [Zubarevich 2022]. Urban residents have higher social status, education, and income, which increases the likelihood of engaging in environmentally responsible consumption.

Summarizing the above, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Women have higher odds of participating in ecologically conscious non-consumption than men.

H2: Individuals of younger and middle age have greater odds of participating in ecologically conscious non-consumption than older individuals.

H3: There is a positive correlation between all components of socio-economic status and participation in ecologically conscious non-consumption.

H3.1: Those with higher incomes have higher odds of engaging in ecologically conscious non-consumption.

H3.2: Those with a higher level of education have higher odds of engaging in ecologically conscious non-consumption.

H3.3: Those who are employed have higher odds of engaging in ecologically conscious non-consumption.

H4: Residents of large cities (1 million+) have higher odds of participating in ecologically conscious consumption, than the residents of other types of settlement.

Psychological well-being is crucial for engagement in environmentally friendly practices, including ecologically conscious consumption. Research shows that anxiety, feelings of guilt, and other environmental emotions experienced by consumers due to environmental pollution have different effects on their pro-environmental behavior in various spheres [Gao *et al.* 2021]. In particular, concerns about environmental destruction can prompt people to implement personal environmental practices as a way of coping with negative emotions.

In connection with this, we formulate the following hypotheses:

H5: Individuals exhibiting signs of pronounced psychological distress have higher odds of participating in ecologically conscious non-consumption.

Empirical studies show that objective and subjective knowledge about the environment and climate change have a significant impact on people's environmental behavior [Abrahamse, Matthies 2012]. Knowledge about the environment indirectly influences behavior through environmental attitudes and values, concern about environmental problems, and subjective efficacy to save the environment.

H6: Those who consume information about the environment and climate change have greater odds of engaging in ecologically conscious non-consumption.

Methods

Data

The empirical basis of the study is the data from a representative survey of the adult population of Russia, conducted by HSE University in June and July 2023 as part of the project 'Household Economic Behavior Monitoring'. The target population includes Russian residents aged 18 and older from 55 Russian regions.

A stratified, multi-stage, probability, territorial address sample was used to collect data. Strata were formed based on geography (55 Russian regions from all 8 federal districts), followed by quotas for gender and age for each region. Respondents were selected according to the following criteria: federal district, region, type of settlement, polling station, gender, and age. Only one person was interviewed in each selected household. The survey was conducted in the form of face-to-face interviews at the respondents' place of residence by specially trained interviewers.

The final sample size consisted of 6,000 respondents and 58% of respondents expressed their agreement to participate in the next wave of the survey.

Measures and descriptives

The key variable, involvement in ecologically conscious non-consumption, was measured using the following question: '*Have you refused to buy necessary goods and/or services due to environmental concerns in the last three months (for example, when you believe that the manufacturer or seller is harming people, animals, or the environment)?*' The response was recorded as a dichotomous variable: (1) Yes, refused to buy; (2) No, didn't refuse to buy. This justified the choice of a binary logistic regression model.

The variables used for the analysis were age, gender, level of education, labor market status, household income, subjective level of well-being, size of settlement, type of housing, locality size, psychological distress, and environmental news consumption. The operationalization of these standard variables, included in the analysis as predictors, is presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Measures and descriptive statistics by involvement in ecologically conscious non-consumption over the past three months, % by column

		Refused	Didn't refuse	All sample
Age	18–24	11,2	9,9	10,0
	25–34	19,6	17,7	17,9
	35–44	20,9	21,2	21,2
	45–54	18,6	16,7	16,9
	55–64	17,1	16,4	16,5
	65+	12,5	18,2	17,7
Gender	Male	39,2	45,5	44,9
	Female	60,8	54,5	55,1
Level of education	Primary or incomplete secondary	4,9	3,6	3,8
	Complete secondary school	11,6	11,3	11,3
	Initial professional	5,3	5,2	5,2
	Secondary professional	37,6	41,8	41,4
	Incomplete higher	5,7	3,2	3,4
	Higher	34,6	34,5	34,5
	PhD	0,2	0,3	0,3
Labor market status	I study and don't work	4,0	2,8	2,9
	I study and work	7,6	5,0	5,2
	I work and am not retired	49,4	52,9	52,6
	Working pensioner	7,0	6,0	6,1
	I'm retired and not working	21,9	25,5	25,1
	No work and not retired	4,0	3,3	3,4
	Housewife on maternity leave	5,9	4,5	4,6
Per capita monthly income	There was no income	0,9	0,6	0,6
	Less than 10 000 rubles	2,5	1,7	1,7
	10001–20000 rubles	20,4	14,0	14,6
	20001–30000 rubles	27,8	23,6	24,0
	30001–45000 rubles	18,5	26,3	25,5
	45001–60000 rubles	14,2	17,6	17,2
	60001–80000 rubles	7,4	8,7	8,6
	80001–100000 rubles	4,6	3,9	3,9
	More than 150000 rubles	3,4	3,8	3,7

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		Refused	Didn't refuse	All sample
Subjective level of well-being	We are barely making ends meet; there is not enough money even for groceries	8,2	3,3	3,7
	There is enough money for food, but buying clothes causes serious difficulties	19,0	14,7	15,1
	We have enough money for food and clothing, but buying durable items (TV, refrigerator, etc.) is a problem for us	41,6	49,0	48,3
	We can buy things like a refrigerator or a TV without difficulty, but it is difficult for us to buy a car.	25,7	28,5	28,2
	We can buy a car, but we can't say we're not strapped for cash	3,8	3,4	3,4
	We can buy any expensive things, real estate and not limit ourselves in anything	1,7	1,2	1,2
Locality size, population	Cities 1 million+	22,6	25,5	25,2
	Cities 250,000 – 1 million	19,2	18,5	18,6
	Cities 100,000 – 250,000	8,6	9,1	9,1
	Towns less than 100,000	24,5	22,4	22,6
	Villages	25,1	24,5	24,6
Housing type	In an apartment belonging to me or my family (purchased or privatized)	61,8	66,8	66,3
	In a house/part of a house or non-privatized apartment owned by the state or local authorities	4,8	2,3	2,5
	In an individual house/part of a house owned by me or my family (purchased, built or privatized)	23,8	24,9	24,8
	In a dormitory	0,8	0,5	0,5
	In rented housing (house, apartment, room)	8,9	5,4	5,7
Psychological distress	Mild manifestation	37,8	44,8	44,2
	Noticeable manifestation	37,6	37,9	37,9
	Pronounced manifestation	24,5	17,3	18,0
News consumption	from traditional channels	37,3	39,3	39,1
	from new channels	62,7	60,7	60,9

Psychological well-being was measured using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale [Kessler *et al.* 2002]. Respondents were asked the following question: ‘*Now I will describe several emotional states of a person, and you will tell me how often you have experienced each of these states over the past two weeks: almost never, rarely, often, or almost every day*’. The four response options from 1 to 4 indicated the frequency of experiencing five emotional states proposed to the respondents: (1) lack of interest in doing anything, daily activities not bringing pleasure; (2) feeling down, depressed, or hopeless; (3) feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge; (4) not being able to stop or control worrying; and (5) feeling lonely. Based on the responses, a psychological distress index was calculated as the sum of responses to each state, ranging from 5 to 20. The index value was then categorized into three categories: (1) 5 to 7 – mild psychological distress; (2) 8 to 10 – noticeable; (3) above 10 – pronounced.

Data analysis

The main methods of data analysis used to identify factors of ecologically conscious consumption were the construction of cross-tables with standardized adjusted residuals and a binary logistic regression model.

To identify the factors associated with the refusal to buy due to environmental concerns, a binary logistic regression model was used. The predictors included the above-mentioned socio-demographic parameters, the level of psychological distress, and the consumption of environmental news. To construct the logistic regression model, we dichotomized the variables: presence of higher education (including incomplete higher education), labor market status, and home ownership.

During the regression analysis, we evaluated numerous intermediate models with different sets of predictors. Firstly, ecologically oriented patterns of consumer behavior can either be manifest in or initiate other forms of sustainable consumption [Sahakian, Wilhite 2014; Elhoushy, Jang 2023]. Consequently, the direction of causality between ecologically conscious consumption and other forms of consumption may be unclear. The issue of endogeneity could significantly distort the model’s other conclusions; therefore, and to eliminate multicollinearity among dependent variables, we excluded variables representing other patterns of consumption from the model. This will be a direction for future research by the authors.

The variable for household income measured in rubles was removed from the model as it was the least significant predictor among all variables and was also correlated with a more important variable—the subjective level of well-being.

After testing the basic set of variables, we refined the model specification in terms of age: we divided the age variable by 10 to capture the change in the dependent variable when age increases not by 1 year, but by 10, and also added the square of age divided by 100. Including the square of age in the model showed that the relationship between engagement in ecologically conscious consumption and individual age is nonlinear. Therefore, after estimating the final model, we additionally evaluated the same set of variables on three sub-samples (18–34, 35–54, 55+ years). The rationale for this division and the discussion of the model results is provided in the description of the results.

The test of the model for heteroscedasticity using the Breusch-Pagan test showed that we should reject the hypothesis that the residual variance is homogeneous

and accept the alternative hypothesis of heteroscedasticity. Since the data exhibited heteroscedasticity, we adjusted the model and used robust estimates in the final regression analysis using the appropriate option in Stata 14.

The analysis of variables in the model for multicollinearity using VIF showed that, apart from life satisfaction and psychological distress, other variables were not correlated with each other.

Results

General portrait of an ecologically conscious Russian consumer

As the empirical data demonstrate, most respondents (87%) did not refuse to buy goods and services due to ecological concerns. Over the last 3 months, only 8,8% of Russians refrained from purchasing goods or services due to concerns about harm caused by the manufacturer or seller to humans, animals, or the environment. This is significantly lower than the findings of other studies [Shabanova 2023]. This discrepancy in the results can be explained by the fact that, firstly, in this study we only record boycotts, whereas Shabanova considers both purchases and boycotts, and secondly, while our survey covered the last three months, Shabanova measured engagement in ethical consumer practices over the past one to two years.

Based on the results of descriptive statistics and standardized adjusted residual analysis, we can describe the profile of a Russian who is more inclined towards ecologically conscious consumption in the form of boycotting certain goods and services. Survey data indicate that individuals who are more likely to make such decisions:

- are women;
- are under the age of 44;
- hold a higher education degree, including incomplete education;
- study and work simultaneously;
- have a monthly income ranging from 10,001 to 30,000 rubles;
- subjectively evaluate their well-being as 'We barely make ends meet; there's not enough money even for groceries' or 'We have enough money for groceries, but buying clothes causes serious difficulties';
- reside in state-owned or municipal housing;
- exhibit a pronounced manifestation of psychological distress.

Russians who refused to buy necessary goods and/or services due to environmental concerns over the past three months are significantly more inclined to consume news about the environment and climate change (*Table 2*).

Non-consumers do so frequently, from 2–3 times a week to several times a day. Mass media is the most common, if not the only source of environmental knowledge, especially after completing formal education [Petersen 2020]. Therefore, due to the limited set of questions in this database, we can consider the consumption of news about the environment and climate change as a cognitive component of environmental orientation, which indirectly influences pro-environmental behavior [Shove 2010; Abrahamse, Matthies 2012].

Table 2. The consumption of ecological news over the last three months, % by column and adjusted standardized residuals

	Refused	Did not refuse	Total
Several times a day	5,6%	8,7%	5,9%
	-3,0	3,0	
Once a day	14,3%	19,0%	14,7%
	-2,9	2,9	
2–3 times a week	10,8%	16,0%	11,3%
	-3,6	3,6	
Once a week	14,6%	13,1%	14,5%
	0,9	-0,9	
2–3 times a month	7,8%	6,3%	7,6%
	1,2	-1,2	
Once a month or less	13,9%	12,4%	13,7%
	1,0	-1,0	
Never watch	33,1%	24,5%	32,3%
	4,0	-4,0	

Chi-squared = 40,545, df = 6, $p < 0,05$

Factors in the refusal to buy goods and/or services due to environmental concerns

To assess the factors influencing involvement in ecologically conscious non-consumption, we employed a binary logistic regression model. The results of the regression analysis are presented in *Table 3*.

First, we focus on the second column of *Table 3* and analyze the predictors of ecologically conscious non-consumption across the entire sample.

The regression analysis indicates that there is a statistically significant association between ecologically conscious non-consumption and gender: women are more likely to be ecologically conscious consumers [D'Souza, Taghian 2017; Elhoushy, Jang 2023], which in the Russian context may be explained by female's greater involvement in issues related to the management of household affairs [Berdysheva, Romanova 2017].

The influence of age on ecologically conscious consumption is nonlinear. Initially, with age, the odds of engaging in ecologically conscious consumption increases, and then decreases. Following Koos [Koos 2009], we attribute this to the fact that young adults and adults have sufficient economic, temporal, and cognitive resources, and knowledge for sustainable consumer practices, but after the peak activity in pre-/post-retirement age, these opportunities lessen. Therefore, we additionally assessed the final regression model in three age groups: 18–34 years, 35–54 years, and over 55 years old.

Table 3. Logistic regression of refusal over the past three months to purchase goods and/or services due to environmental concerns by group, odds ratio

	All sample	18–34	35–54	55+
Male	1,266**	1,342	1,115	1,486**
Age / 10	1,516**			
Age square / 100	0,952***			
Has higher education	1,021	1,080	0,900	1,356
Employed	0,860	0,798	1,054	1,020
Subjective level of well-being: We have enough money for food and clothing, but buying durable items (TV, refrigerator, etc.) is a problem for us (base – ‘We barely make ends meet; there’s not enough money even for groceries’ or ‘There’s enough money for groceries, but buying clothes poses serious difficulties’)	0,549***	0,479**	0,485***	0,618**
Subjective level of well-being: We can easily buy things like a refrigerator or a TV, but it is difficult for us to buy a car	0,551***	0,456**	0,500***	0,611*
Subjective level of well-being: We can buy a car, but we cannot say that we are not strapped for cash; We can buy any expensive things, real estate and not deny ourselves anything	0,649*	0,503*	0,675	0,655
Small towns (base – village)	0,946	0,785	0,876	1,156
Medium-sized cities	0,885	0,934	0,862	0,800
Big cities	0,937	1,049	0,767	0,967
Moscow, Saint Petersburg	0,625**	0,613	0,642	0,522**
Home ownership	0,633***	0,846	0,672	0,312***
Noticeable psychological distress (base – mild psychological distress)	1,094	1,180	1,235	0,831
Pronounced psychological distress	1,400***	1,361	1,351	1,290
Consuming news about the environment and climate change	1,140***	1,178***	1,088**	1,182***
Number of people in household	1,022	1,116*	0,949	1,013
Over the past three months could not buy the foreign brands they need because the latter have disappeared from sale in Russia	2,661***	2,436***	2,498***	3,539***
Constant	0,053***	0,0788***	0,176***	0,127***
N	5451	1526	2080	1845
pseudo-R ²	0,06	0,07	0,05	0,08

Statistical significance: *** p<0,01, ** p<0,05, * p<0,1

Thus, we accept hypotheses H1 and H2 regarding the influence of gender and age on engagement in ecologically conscious non-consumption.

Of all components of SES, only the level of subjective well-being proved to be a significant factor in participation in ecologically conscious non-consumption. Conversely, having higher education or being employed, contrary to the literature [Koos 2009], did not have a significant relationship with the level of subjective well-being. This, however, corresponds with Russian studies [Shabanova 2023]. Therefore, from the hypotheses about the role of SES, we only accept hypothesis H3.1. An increase in subjective well-being reduces the odds of engaging in ecologically conscious non-consumption.

Additionally, there is a negative impact of home ownership on engagement in ecologically conscious non-consumption. Russians living in state-owned or municipal housing, in non-privatized apartments, in dormitories, or in rental housing have higher chances of participating in ecologically conscious non-consumption. However, employment and income level did not show a significant association with ecologically conscious non-consumption, confirming our assumption about this being a lifestyle rather than a guise for cost-saving. This is further supported by the fact that household size does not have a statistically significant influence on the dependent variable. Overall, the connection between ecologically conscious non-consumption and aspects of material wealth, in our opinion, can be attributed to age, as discussed above.

Regarding the place of residence, the results show that, compared to other types of settlements, living in Moscow and St. Petersburg significantly reduces the odds of engaging in ecologically conscious non-consumption. Living in other settlements, regardless of their size, does not affect engagement in ecological consumption. Therefore, we reject H4.

The cognitive component of environmental attitudes in the form of consuming news about the environment and climate change, significantly increases an individual's chances of engaging in ecologically conscious non-consumption. Therefore, we accept H6.

Experiencing psychological distress increases the likelihood of engaging in ecologically conscious non-consumption. This confirms H5.

Age differences in ecologically conscious non-consumption

The influence of age on participation in ecologically conscious consumption, according to our data, is nonlinear: initially, it increases, but after peaking in middle age, it decreases. *Figure 1* shows the relationship between engagement in ecologically conscious consumption and age.

Individuals under the age of 44 are more likely to boycott goods or services due to environmental concerns. The regression analysis on three age-based subsamples demonstrated that, controlling for age group, significant factors influencing engagement in ecologically conscious behavior are: subjective level of well-being (which also decreases the odds of participation), consumption of news about the environment and climate change, and the inability to purchase foreign brands. Residency in major cities and homeownership are significant only for the older age group, with residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg aged 55 and above being less inclined to refuse to buy due to environmental concerns.

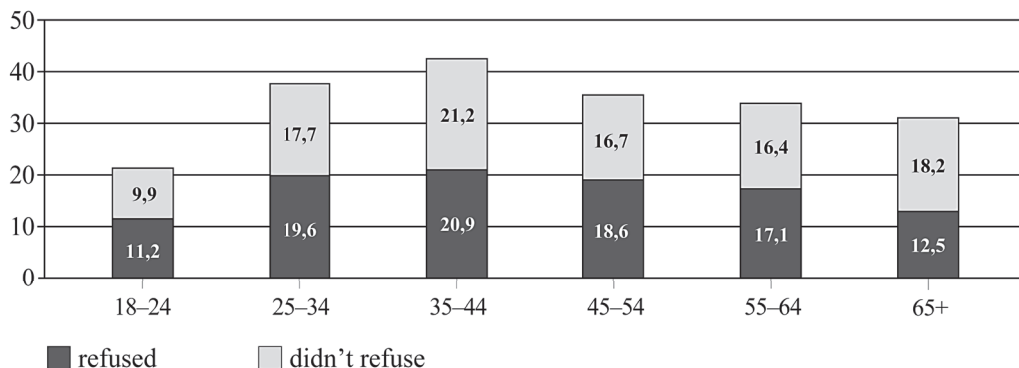


Figure 1. Distribution of ecologically conscious and non-conscious consumers by age groups, %

Question: 'Have you refused to buy necessary goods and/or services due to environmental concerns in the last three months (for example, when you believe that the manufacturer or seller is harming people, animals, or the environment)?'

Dividing the regression model into age groups, several significant factors influencing ecologically conscious consumption among the entire Russian sample lose their impact, which indicates the predominance of age in the differentiation of involvement in environmental non-consumption. This is corroborated by findings from other studies, indicating the patterns of sustainable consumption among younger generations [Koos 2009; Elhoushy, Jang 2023] and requires more detailed study in the Russian context.

The principal socio-demographic parameters distinguishing Russians in terms of their propensity to engage in sustainable non-consumption practices by refusing to buy due to environmental concerns are age, gender, material prosperity, and the consumption of environmental information. However, a more detailed analysis shows that within each age group, individuals are homogeneous in their socio-demographic characteristics. Hence, we believe that age reflects a complex of ecological attitudes and values, environmental concerns, the perception of one's effectiveness in environmental protection, and emotions toward nature and the environment. While these variables were not included in the analysis due to methodological constraints, they are emphasized in other studies [Lee *et al.* 2015] and represent potential avenues for further exploration.

Discussion and conclusion

Ecologically conscious (non-)consumption, as a form of sustainable consumption, represents a significant area of contemporary research on market dynamics and the ethical aspects of modern economies. Based on empirical evidence, we conclude that approximately 10% of Russians have regularly refused to buy goods and services due to environmental concerns over the past three months. We are only seeing the emergence of environmentally responsible consumer choice in Russia. We suggest that

obstacles to Russians' engagement in ecologically conscious consumption stem not only from institutional constraints but also from the circumstances of ongoing economic and political crises, which have restructured consumption patterns on a broader scale. Therefore, the aim of this study was to identify the social portrait of an ecologically conscious non-consumer, focusing on the refusal to purchase goods and services due to environmental concerns in contemporary Russia.

The regression analysis revealed that ecologically conscious non-consumption is more prevalent among women, young and middle-aged individuals, those who rate their subjective level of well-being as low, individuals who do not own their own home, those not residing in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and consumers of news related to the environment and climate change.

We suggest that ecologically conscious consumption in the form of boycotts is most typical for the generations X and Y. For them, environmental concerns and involvement in environmental practices are part of everyday norms, as the discourse on the environmental crisis has accompanied them since early childhood [Andersen *et al.* 2021], and they seek to contribute personally to its resolution [Cook 2016; Kyroglou, Henn 2022]. In this sense, ecologically conscious (non-)consumption becomes an expression of informal political engagement [Micheletti 2003; Shaw 2007; Kyroglou, Henn 2022].

Individuals engaged in ecologically conscious consumption more frequently exhibit signs of psychological issues and mental instability. This could be attributed to their direct involvement in environmental issues and the associated anxieties, as well as to their general psychological instability due to the high uncertainty in their lives, especially among younger generations [Cook 2016; Gao *et al.* 2021]. It is important to note that based on the data, it is not possible to identify the direction of causality between mental problems and engagement in ecological consumption. However, such a direction of causality has been identified in empirical studies, indicating that consumption of environmental information does contribute to environmental concern and practices of environmental care [Abrahamse, Matthies 2012].

As we assumed, the context of the crisis makes itself felt in which social groups are more likely to be involved in boycotts due to environmental concerns. We observe that in developing countries and in situations of economic-political crises, Western models of ecologically conscious consumption do not fully apply. Our data support the findings of studies indicating that in the Russian context, public engagement in ecologically conscious (non-)consumption decreases with an increase in material wealth [Kurbanov, Prokhoda 2019], indicating a materialistic culture in Russia [Almakaeva, Nastina 2023]. In times of crisis, characterized by numerous constraints and uncertainty, the mechanisms of sustainable consumer behavior are seen in a new light. Instead of traditional consumption strategies, individuals focus more on pragmatic aspects, seeking to acquire stability and safety within limited resources and opportunities.

This idea is also supported by the empirical result that residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg are less likely to engage in pro-environmental boycotts. Firstly, we suggest that in the capital cities, markets for sustainable consumption goods are better developed, providing individuals with more market alternatives to practically express their ecological attitudes without resorting to boycotts, which are usually perceived negatively [Kurbanov, Prokhoda 2019]. Secondly, residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg are likely to be more individualistic, thus less inclined towards prosocial and pro-environmental activities, and more towards personal gain [Shabanova 2023].

According to studies [Almakaeva, Nastina 2023], Russians tend to gravitate towards materialistic values prioritizing security, stability, and economic growth, with hedonistic consumption patterns, especially against the backdrop of ongoing socio-economic crises.

Nevertheless, crises might also bring opportunities for change. Rejecting familiar consumption patterns may be a starting point for engaging in ecologically conscious (non-)consumption practices. We assume that boycotting might serve as a starting point for individuals to incorporate ecological practices into their daily lives since a refusal to buy is a more accessible strategy for expressing one's attitudes and values in a situation of limited economic opportunities. Looking to the future, we might see a spillover effect and the formation of a more sustainable and conscious lifestyle because of a rethinking of consumption patterns stimulated by economic crises. The social potential for the expansion of environmentally responsible consumption will probably be the current youth. Viewed in this way, a crisis might be seen as an opportunity for a future transition to ecologically conscious consumption as it encourages individuals to seek new ways of satisfying their needs [Koos *et al.* 2017].

There are some limitations of the study which should be considered when discussing the results and which could be directions for further research. First, the use of longitudinal data could focus on the dynamics of ecologically conscious consumption in Russia. So far, we cannot make conclusions on the changes or on the direction of causal relationships. Another important limitation of the study is the use of only one practice to assess involvement in ecologically conscious (non-)consumption [Elhoushy, Jang 2023]. The empirical model is limited by the available empirical data, not only on the dependent variable but also on the set of socio-demographic parameters. However, as demonstrated, the results enrich the discussion on generational differences in ecological consumption, the relationship between ethical purchases and more general consumer patterns, and socio-demographic predictors of ecologically conscious (non-)consumption. A valuable continuation of the study would be a longitudinal analysis of changes in ethical consumption among Russians. The monitoring data used in this study can provide this opportunity over time.

We also leave the broader institutional context of ecological consumption outside the scope of this study. Public engagement in ecological practices is largely influenced by macro-level conditions: the level of prosperity, the economic and political development of the country, the accessibility and development of infrastructure, the growth of the ethical production market segment, and trust in social institutions [Koos 2009]. In future research, it is crucial to include these variables in empirical analysis and conduct comparative studies.

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Экологически осознанное потребление в период кризиса: социальный портрет отказывающихся от покупки по экологическим причинам в России

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Аннотация

В фокусе исследования находится экологически осознанное потребление, отражающее комплекс ценностей, установок и практик бережного и ответственного отношения к окружающей среде. Мы отталкиваемся от того факта, что даже во времена кризиса, который характеризуется социальными потрясениями, падением душевого дохода и ростом неопределенности, находятся люди, которые проявляют ответственность по отношению к окружающей среде в своем повседневном потребительском поведении. На основе

Автор выражает благодарность сотрудникам Лаборатории экономико-социологических исследований НИУ ВШЭ за полезные обсуждения и помощь в работе над рукописью. Особая благодарность З.В. Котельниковой и В.А. Кондратенко, а также анонимным рецензентам за ценные замечания по тексту. Работа выполнена в Лаборатории экономико-социологических исследований НИУ ВШЭ в рамках проекта «Экономическое поведение домохозяйств» при поддержке Программы фундаментальных исследований НИУ ВШЭ.

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данных репрезентативного опроса населения России, проведенного в НИУ ВШЭ в рамках проекта «Мониторинг экономического поведения домохозяйств» в 2023 году, с помощью логистической регрессии был выявлен социальный портрет экологически осознанного потребителя во времена кризиса на примере отказа от покупки товаров по экологическим причинам. Регрессионный анализ показал, что экологически осознанное потребление в форме бойкотов в большей степени распространено среди женщин, людей молодого и среднего возраста, индивидов, оценивающих свой субъективный уровень благополучия как низкий, не имеющих собственного жилья, не проживающих в Москве и Санкт-Петербурге, а также потребителей новостей, связанных с экологией и изменением климата. В исследовании делается предположение, что кризис можно рассматривать как возможность для будущего перехода к экологически осознанному потреблению, поскольку он побуждает людей искать новые способы удовлетворения своих потребностей. Результаты могут быть академически и практически полезны для определения социального потенциала экологически осознанного потребительского выбора, концептуально и эмпирически дифференцированного от других форм этичного потребления, а также могут способствовать развитию заботы об окружающей среде среди населения в периоды затяжного кризиса.

Ключевые слова: потребление, экологически осознанное потребление, устойчивое потребление, отказ от покупки, бойкоты, потребление в кризис, кризис как возможность, экологическая культура, инвайронментальная социология, молодежь

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